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In 3 Hh Ps
HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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Subject: "FACTS ABOUT TEA." Information from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Some time ago, our correspondent with the Federal Food and Drug Administration sent us a report on tea labels, and different varieties of tea. As we learned then, the Food and Drug Administration enforces the National Tea Act, which provides for the examination of all tea offered for entry into the United States. Only the tea that meets the Government standards of quality, purity, and fitness for consumption can be admitted.

Under the provisions of the Tea Act, the Secretary of Agriculture appoints a board of tea experts each year, and these experts fix the standards for teas that come into the United States from the tea countries -- India and Ceylon, China and Japan, Java, Sumatra, and so on.

Samples of tea, representing the standards set by the United States Government, are sold at cost to importers, who send them to their agents in the Far East. Tea inspectors at the various ports of entry in this country have similar samples. The inspectors examine all the different lines of tea sent to the United States, and customs officials refuse entry to those that do not conform to the standards.

Well, all these facts, in today's report, are leading up to the main news -- tea figures just issued by the Food and Drug Administration for the year that ended June 30, 1936. During this year, officials examined more than 84 million pounds of tea. Of this total, less than 71 thousand pounds were rejected, which shows that tea exporters know the requirements of our National Tea Act, and take care to send over only teas that meet these requirements. You will note what a great improvement has been made in the quality of tea sent to the United States, if you compare the figures of 1922 with the figures of 1936. In 1922, the total amount of tea examined was 87,398,221 pounds. Of this amount, more than one and one-half million pounds were rejected.

Now, as you already know if you have followed this series of Food and Drug talks, the three main kinds of tea are black, or fermented; green, or unfermented; and oolong, or semi-fermented. You may also have heard that people in the United States prefer black tea to green. That seems to be a fact, judging from the figures in today's report. For of the total of more than 84 million pounds of tea examined last year, more than 61 million were black tea, and more than 14 million, green tea. The rest of the tea imported included more than 7 and a half million pounds of oolong and more than 76 thousand pounds of mixed teas.

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Quoting directly, from today's report: "Black tea made up more than two-fifths of the total tea examined. Although the largest part of the black tea examined came from India and Ceylon, a large quantity also came from Java. The tea from Java and Sumatra, all black tea, amounted to nearly one-fourth of the total tea examined, with smaller amounts from Japan, Formosa and Africa. Teas of this type are often graded to a particular leaf size, and are frequently sold as Orange Pekoe or Pekoe, if they are of the leaf size which these terms signify."

Now let me see -- I believe the tenderest tea leaves, taken from the very tip end of the tea plant, are called Orange Pekoe. Pekoe is the next larger size, and Pekoe Souchong next.

Continuing with our report: "An appreciable quantity of black tea also came from China. This fully fermented tea is almost exclusively of the Congou type. The so-called English Breakfast Tea is a well-known tea of this type. As a whole, black tea has shown an increase in the last few years, beginning with 1934."

Well, so much for black, or fermented teas. Now let's see what our report has to say about green, or unfermented tea. Quoting: "Green tea, which is unfermented tea coming mainly from Japan and China, continued to decrease somewhat in the amount imported. This loss was reflected by increases in the percentages of black tea and oolong tea."

And now, an interesting analysis of the various sources of the tea we drank last year. More than two-fifths of it originated in India and Ceylon. Since 1934, tea from these countries has shown a rather steady small increase. More than one-fifth of our tea came from Java and Sumatra. China, where the cultivation of tea originated, sent us only about one-fourteenth of the total imports. The tea from China included green, black, and Oolong, the black tea predominating. From Japan we got chiefly green tea, and from Formosa chiefly Oolong, although in both of these countries the production of black tea is increasing.

In conclusion, our correspondent states: "Of the entire large amount of tea examined less than one percent was rejected. For several years past the total rejections have been less than one-half of one percent, and constitute a good indication of the care tea shippers are taking to send forward only tea of passable quality, or better."

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